



**Testimony in support of Senate Bill 239  
Senate Committee on Agriculture  
September 17, 2015**

Chairman Hune and Members of the Committee:

The Student Animal Legal Defense Fund at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School is a student chapter of the national non-profit, the Animal Legal Defense Fund, an organization that works to protect and advance the interests of animals through the legal system. The Animal Legal Defense Fund has over 100,000 members and 200 law student chapters worldwide.

The Student Animal Legal Defense Fund at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School strongly supports SB 239 which will prohibit breed discrimination and help keep pets with their families.

Safe communities are of great importance, however, countless examples from across the country have shown that breed discrimination is not the answer. Breed-discriminatory legislation is ineffective and difficult to enforce, and it unjustly forces families to give up their beloved pets. These laws target dogs based entirely on their appearance, when instead communities should enact breed-neutral laws that focus on responsible dog ownership. Studies have shown that dog bite prevention laws that emphasize the temperament and behavior of the dog, and the behavior of the owner, are much more effective than overbroad breed-discriminatory laws. The majority of Americans agree – a survey referenced by Best Friends Animal Society showed that 84% of Americans don't believe the government should tell them what breeds of dog they are or are not allowed to own.

Many owners of the commonly-discriminated-against "pit bull-type" dog can attest to the fact that all dogs are individuals and any breed of dog can have a friendly, docile temperament. These owners should not be punished simply because of the way their dogs look. Breed-discriminatory laws have torn families apart and forced pet owners to move to avoid surrendering their pets. This is not something that should be forced upon Michigan families.

SB 239 will prevent unfair discrimination against pets, and will ban municipalities from enacting ineffective legislation that hurts responsible dog owners. It is time for Michigan to ban this outdated method of discrimination that truly does more harm than good. It is for these reasons that the Student Animal Legal Defense Fund at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School respectfully urges the Senate Committee on Agriculture to support SB 239.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at [prygoskia@cooley.edu](mailto:prygoskia@cooley.edu). Thank you for your time and consideration.

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